

Message Text

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CINCUSAFE
CINCEUR
USNMR SHAPE
CINCUSNAVEUR
USDOCOSOUTH
USDOCOLANDSOUTHEAST IZMIR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 2186

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, TU
SUBJ: FOREIGN POLICY CONSEQUENCES OF EARLY ELECTION IN TURKEY

1. WHILE IT IS STILL UNCERTAIN WHETHER TURKEY'S GENERAL
ELECTIONS WILL BE SET FOR JUNE OR FOR OCTOBER, IT IS
CLEAR THAT TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY PERFORMANCE COULD BE AFFECTED
BY SEVERAL INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATIONS RELATED TO THE
ELECTIONS: THE POSSIBLE EARLY FALL OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT,
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THE CAMPAIGN ATMOSPHER ITSELF, AND THE POST-ELECTION PERIOD
OF FORMING A NEW GOVERNMENT.

2. POSSIBLE FALL OF THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT
A. POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS
1) DEP PRIMIN ERBAKAN, WHO STRONGLY OPPOSES
DEMIREL'S EFFORT FOR EARLY ELECTIONS, COULD LEAD HIS NATIONAL

SALVATION PARTY (NSP) OUT OF THE GOVERNING COALITION OVER THIS ISSUE. ERBAKAN MIGHT HOPE TO PARTICIPATE IN ANOTHER COALITION OR HE MIGHT USE THE RESIGNATION AS A MEANS BOTH OF RETALIATING AGAINST DEMIREL AND FREEING HIMSELF FOR CAMPAIGN-ORIENTED ATTACKS ON DEMIREL.

2) ALTERNATIVELY, DEMIREL COULD RESIGN AS A CONDITION OF GETTING A PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY FOR EARLY ELECTIONS.

3) IF THE GOVERNMENT FELL, THE NEXT STEP WOULD BE THE DESIGNATION BY THE PRESIDENT OF AN INTERIM PRIME MINISTER. IN PAST PRACTICE, THE OUTGOING PRIME MINISTER GENERALLY HAS BEEN ASKED TO STAY ON AS CARETAKER, TOGETHER WITH HIS CABINET. HOWEVER, IF BY THEN PARLIAMENT HAD VOTED TO HOLD ELECTIONS IN JUNE, IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT THE PRESIDENT MIGHT APPOINT AN INDEPENDENT TO HEAD AN "ELECTION GOVERNMENT".

4) IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT ECEVIT WOULD SEEK TO FORM A COALITION OR WOULD GIVE THE SUPPORT OF HIS REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) TO THE FORMATION OF A MINORITY GOVERNMENT DRAWN FROM THE NSP, DEMOCRATIC PARTY, AND INDEPENDENTS. HOWEVER, IF ELECTIONS ARE CALLED FOR JUNE, THE EFFORT TO FORM A NEW COALITION MIGHT NOT BE WORTH WHAT IT WOULD COST IN TIME TAKEN AWAY FROM CAMPAIGNING.

B. POTENTIAL POLICY CONSEQUENCES

1) IF THE GOVERNMENT FELL BUT DEMIREL STAYED ON AS CARETAKER PRIME MINISTER, PROBABLY THERE WOULD BE LITTLE CHANGE IN DEMIREL'S "RUNNING ROOM" FOR THE CONDUCT OF FOREIGN POLICY. HE IS ALREADY UNDER CONSIDERABLE CONSTRAINT BECAUSE OF THE FRAGMENTED PARLIAMENTARY SITUATION AND THE FORTHCOMING ELECTION. IF ERBAKAN DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT, DEMIREL'S CABINET DECISIONS AT LEAST WOULD BE CONFIDENTIAL

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FREED FROM ERBAKAN'S OBSTRUCTIONISM, ALTHOUGH DEMIREL COULD EXPECT STRONG NSP CRITICISM OF THOSE DECISIONS IN PARLIAMENT AND PUBLIC FORA.

2) A COMPLETE REPLACEMENT OF DEMIREL'S COALITION WOULD MEAN THE REMOVAL OF A GOVERNMENT WITH WHICH WE HAVE IMPORTANT UNDERSTANDINGS REGARDING CYPRUS AND WITH WHICH WE SIGNED THE DEFENSE COOPERATION AGREEMENT (DCA). IT WOULD ALSO MEAN THAT A NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD BE GOING THROUGH ITS BREAK-IN PERIOD WHILE WE ARE TRYING TO SUSTAIN MOVEMENT ON CYPRUS AND COOL DOWN THE AEGEAN DISPUTE.

3) HOWEVER, IT CAN BE ARGUED THAT A CARETAKER GOVERNMENT HEADED BY AN INDEPENDENT COULD ACT WITH FEWER CONSTRAINTS, IT PROBABLY IS MORE LIKELY THAT SUCH A GOVERNMENT WOULD, LIKE THE IRMAK GOVERNMENT (NOVEMBER 1974-APRIL 1975), FEEL OBLIGED TO CONSULT WITH ALL THE POLITICAL PARTIES ON EVERY ISSUE AND ADOPT THE LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR. HOWEVER, AN INDEPENDENT CARETAKER GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT PROBABLY BE LIKELY TO UNDERTAKE RADICAL INITIATIVES IN THE INTERNATIONAL AREA AND COULD PERHAPS BETTER RESIST ELECTION CAMPAIGN

PRESSURES FOR ACTIONS SUCH AS SENDING THE SISMIK TO EXPLORE IN CONTESTED AREAS OF THE AEGEAN.

4) AS REGARDS POTENTIAL PRE-ELECTION COALITIONS (I.E., A " REAL" GOVERNMENT AS OPPOSED TO A CARETAKER GOVERNMENT), ANY SUCH GOVERNMENT THAT INCLUDED ERBAKAN--AND IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT INDEED TO FORM A COALITION WITHOUT HIM--WOULD BE SUBJECT TO HIS PRESSURE FOR A HARD LINE ON THE CYPRUS AND AEGEAN PROBLEMS. ECEVIT HIMSELF IS WIDELY REGARDED AS HAVING AN UNRIVALLED CAPABILITY TO BRING TURKEY INTO A CYPRUS SETTLEMENT--BUT, IT IS GENERALLY CONCEDED, ONLY IF HIS PARTY WINS A PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY, NOT BEFORE.

3. THE ELECTION ATMOSPHERE

A. THE ATMOSPHERE OF AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN IS ALREADY APPARENT IN TURKEY. IT WILL INTENSIFY QUICKLY IF A DECISION IS MADE IN THE COURSE OF THE NEXT TWO TO THREE WEEKS TO HOLD ELECTIONS IN EARLY JUNE, OR WILL GROW MORE GRADUALLY IF

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ELECTIONS ARE TO BE HELD IN OCTOBER. THE LAST MONTH BEFORE THE ELECTIONS (I.E., EARLY MAY TO EARLY JUNE OR EARLY SEPTEMBER TO EARLY OCTOBER) WILL BE A TIME OF MAXIMUM CAMPAIGNING. WHILE BOTH MAJOR PARTIES EXPECT THE MAJOR ISSUES TO CENTER ON THE DOMESTIC ECONOMY, NO PARTY WANTS TO GIVE ITS RIVALS OPPORTUNITIES TO SCORE POINTS AGAINST IT FOR BEING SOFT ON SUCH NATIONALISTICALLY SENSITIVE ISSUES AS CYPRUS, THE AEGEAN, AND RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.

B. DEMIREL HAS BUILT A FAIRLY DEFENSIBLE POSITION ON THE ABOVE ISSUES, BUT IT IS NOT INVULNERABLE. HIS POSITION ALLOWS SOME POSSIBILITY OF MOVEMENT ON CYPRUS BEFORE THE ELECTIONS AND WOULD SUPPORT TURKISH PARLIAMENTARY RATIFICATION OF THE DEFENSE COOPERATION AGREEMENT IF CONGRESS ENDORSED THE DCA MORE THAN ONE MONTH BEFORE THE ELECTIONS. ON THE AEGEAN, HOWEVER, THE RPP CONTINUES TO ATTACK HIM STRONGLY FOR NOT ASSERTING TURKEY'S CLAIMS FORCEFULLY ENOUGH. DEMIREL MAY BE UNDER CAMPAIGN PRESSURE TO SEND THE SISMIK BACK INTO DISPUTED AEGEAN AREAS.

C. AS LONG AS CONGRESSIONAL ENDORSEMENT OF THE DCA IS BEING WITHHELD (AND PARTICULARLY IF TOO OPEN AN OFFICIAL LINK IS MADE BETWEEN THIS AND TURKISH CONCESSIONS ON CYPRUS), THERE IS A RISK THAT DEMIREL'S RIVALS, YIELDING TO CAMPAIGN PRESSURES, WILL TAKE FOREIGN POLICY POSITIONS WHICH WILL MAKE IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO RESTORE SATISFACTORILY THE US-TURKISH SECURITY RELATIONSHIP IN THE POST ELECTION PERIOD.

4. FORMING A NEW GOVERNMENT AFTER THE ELECTIONS
AFTER THE INCONCLUSIVE 1973 ELECTIONS, IT TOOK 101 DAYS TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. WHEN THAT GOVERNMENT RESIGNED SEVEN MONTHS LATER, 194 DAYS PASSED BEFORE A PARLIAMENTARY-BASED

SUCCESSOR COULD BE FOUND. WHILE A SIMILAR DELAY WILL NOT
NECESSARILY FOLLOW THE 1977 ELECTIONS, IT SHOULD BE NOTED
THAT THE OUTCOME IS EXPECTED TO BE CLOSE AND MAY WELL GIVE
RISE TO NEW SEARCHES FOR COALITIONS. THUS A LONG PERIOD OF
CARETAKER GOVERNMENT, DURING WHICH MOST MAJOR DECISIONS ON
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FOREGIN POLICY AGAIN WOULD HAVE TO BE DEFERRED, COULD FOLLOW
THE 1977 ELECTIONS.
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